

## **Kate Krontiris – New Research from Reboot: Reimagining Elections Administration**

Organization: Reboot ([www.thereboot.org](http://www.thereboot.org))

### **New Research from Reboot: Reimagining Elections Administration**

**Comment:** Government accountability demands an engaged electorate. But in the United States, electoral participation is limited by systems that are out of sync with the expectations of 21st century voters.

The mechanics of American democracy are due for a modernization. Finding out how to vote, when to vote, and where to vote is too often a test of jumping through bureaucratic hoops. And a lack of standardization has hindered scalable solutions. Each of the country's more than 10,000 election jurisdictions has its own unique systems and processes that define the voting experience locally.

Our friends at the non-profit, non-partisan organization TurboVote ([www.turbovote.org](http://www.turbovote.org)) are trying to make American democracy as efficient as Amazon.com. To help these passionate citizens understand how to do that, we asked the following question:

“What are the human motivations, technological systems, and institutional landscapes that define elections administration at the most local levels, and how can we improve them?”

To answer this question, we launched a six-city design research investigation into a diverse subset of election offices across the United States. We spoke with over 70 elections administrators, elected officials, good governance folks, party hacks, and voters. We mapped how users register to vote and vote-by-mail, understood the experience of being elections clerks, and identified pain points that make the voter experience burdensome.

We found that the solutions to many of the most pressing problems already exist, despite technology constraints and complex institutional governance.

Many of the election offices we visited are staffed with dedicated public servants who have displayed great entrepreneurship and creativity in reaching their voters. Yet leaders trying to implement the innovations they know are necessary face significant constraints. Regulatory friction, budget reductions and political influence all conspire to make electoral change difficult and slow. In particular, the technical systems these offices are using are old, locally customized, and increasingly unique.

There are many cases where vision and entrepreneurship have succeeded. But these innovations often occur in isolation, preventing good ideas from spreading. If these existing solutions were surfaced, popularized and remixed, they might experience greater uptake across the country.

Using these research findings, we are supporting TurboVote to develop product prototypes for testing in a handful of jurisdictions later in 2013.

These findings are summarized at a high level at this link:

<http://thereboot.org/blog/project/elections-administration/>

We would be happy to testify, in much greater detail, about the results of our research – and the opportunities this research presents for national-level improvements – with the Presidential Commission.

Thank you for the work you are doing in service of improving American democracy.

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**About Reboot:**

Reboot is a social enterprise working to improve governance and development worldwide. We design and implement systems that help the world's leading organizations become more responsive to the communities they serve. We like to think of this as working toward a 21st century social contract. From public financial management in Nigeria and media development in Pakistan, to civic engagement in the United States and beyond, our work allows citizens to make their voices heard and live better lives.

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